

Scholarship Statement

Knowledge production typically has occurred within an intellectual vacuum in higher education, establishing clear divides between the knowers (the scientists, experts, and intellectuals) and the known (the community members seen as an object of study, not a source of knowledge).

Through critical community engagement the tables can be turned so that community members are seen as not only a source of knowledge, but as esteemed teachers and mentors providing insightful analysis and leadership in the trajectory of a student's education, faculty research and the advancement in social change issues. Revamping the traditions of knowledge production so that local knowledge is seen as a valid and an intellectually rigorous source of learning, teaching and research significantly alters the social, cultural, and political landscape of knowledge production in the university, which in and of itself is a profound type of social change, one that constitutes what I consider a major service to the college, discipline and wider community.

Community-based research and “co-inquiry” projects represent a theoretical and political approach to knowledge-production, a path less traveled by most academics due to the amount of time, collaboration, and relationship-building it necessitates, and the lack of guarantee that this form of scholarship will be adequately valued by academic colleagues. When building partnerships with communities and local organizations to build shared projects of inquiry and social change, a significant amount of time is spent defining the partnership, roles, expectations, evaluation mechanisms, knowledge production, authorship and distribution plans, and exchange of resources so that the collaboration is mutually beneficial to all parties. Keys to these research partnerships include emphasis on collaboration (working *with* rather than *on* people); participation (participatory worldview); equality (mutual respect and appreciation between all participants in the research process); co-production (new research knowledge is co-produced) and social justice (research outcomes have social purpose and impact for those involved) (Armstrong and Banks, 2011). OtherS have noted:

Community-engaged scholarship involves community partners to identify appropriate areas of inquiry, design studies and/or creative activities, implement activities that contribute to shared learning and capacity building, and/or engage in other activities that bridge university/college and community contexts. It uses information gathered, the actions taken, and the relationships established to bring about positive change within the community and the higher education institution. Its products include, but are not limited to, publications, exhibitions, and programs, as well as partnerships, courses, grants, curricula, experiences, or understandings that simultaneously advance the mission and goals of the higher education institution(s) and of the community organization(s), or the public more generally. (Community Engagement Initiative, 2011).

Final research products, publications or outcomes of the research process may look different in community-based research than typical conventions of scholarship and may take much more time to produce. Such is the case in my experience and approach to my own participatory research and collaborative scholarship endeavors, thus in my life of “Research Projects,” I have given a brief description of the activities and outcomes that came out of each research effort in order to exemplify the ways in which engaged scholarship may come to fruition in unique and diverse “final products.” Some of my own research has yet to be translated into publishable form.